

Stiltsville Administrative History Summary  
As of August 15, 2000

Administrative management of “Stiltsville” began in the 60s when the State of Florida recognized the need to gain control over the area.

- August 1965    State established leases for submerged lands: ¼ acre “campsite” circles for \$100 annually.
- 11-25-75        The State of Florida Department of Natural Resources recommended denying to renew campsite leases.
- 5-1-76          Fifteen leases were renewed for ¼ acre campsite circles for \$300 annually: Terms included expiration on July 1, 1999; “shall not be allowed to expand the size of the structure”; “the value of the structure will be amortized over the life of the lease . . .excluding the pilings”; lessee may not reconstruct if structure is more than 50% damaged; “ neither shall the premises be used for commercial purposes”; “premises shall be used exclusively for campsite purposes”; “no sewage shall be discharged into the Bay”; “the Lessee agrees to pay all special assessments or taxes”; and “the stilt houses shall be removed (by and at the owner’s expense – being researched by SOL)”.
- 6-28-80        Biscayne National Monument changed to Biscayne National Park and expanded. “Stiltsville” contained within new boundaries.
- 12-13-85       Florida dedicated submerged lands within new park boundaries to the Federal government.
- 7-14-92        Stiltsville #2210 collapsed. As a result of injuries sustained in the collapse, two individuals sought damages against BISC totaling \$3,000,000. After three years of investigation, the Department of the Interior Solicitor denied the claims.
- 8-24-92        Hurricane Andrew destroyed 7 structures; damaged 7 which were eventually rebuilt.
- 1995-1996      NPS cleaned up debris including radio tower. Total costs to the Federal government: \$454,527. Total costs repaid by leaseholders: \$61,200.
- Approx. 1994   Superintendent Frost met with leaseholders to explain lack of authority to renew/extend/issue new leases and to encourage leaseholders to explore listing on National Register of Historic Places.

- 1998 – 1999 Various organizations expressed support of listing “Stiltsville” on the National Register (Dade Heritage Trust, Florida Historical Resources Division, Miami City Commission)
- 9-13-98 Florida Historical Resources Division transmitted to the park a copy of National Register nomination package “as it was presented to the National Register Review Board”.
- 10-27-98 BISC Marine Biologist issued draft statement of ecological importance regarding the land and waters of “Stiltsville”
- 12-28-98 BISC forwarded national register nomination package to the Keeper of the National Register for consideration.
- 3-18-99 Keeper of the National Register determined “Stiltsville” was not eligible for listing.
- 3-26-99 Superintendent Frost issued letter explaining current status to interested parties and politicians: “With the National Register decision issued and the lease expirations approaching, the range of our management options is determined by the particular laws, policies, and plans that apply to this situation. . . The presence of privately-owned houses is generally considered contrary to the purposes of designated national parks, and there is no evidence of Congressional intent or National Park Service policy that would support making Stiltsville an exception. . . . Biscayne’s current General Management Plan, approved in 1983, calls for the end of private residences on park lands and explicitly refers to Stiltsville. In the absence of National Register eligibility, there appear to be no compelling public or operational needs that would justify altering or disregarding that plan.”
- 4-1-99 BISC staff (Frost, Mayr, Elliott) met with Leaseholders. Superintendent Frost explained status (leases expire on July 1, 1999, provisions for renewal/extension do not exist, GMP specifies removal of structure upon expiration of leases, NPS policies do not provide for leasing lands except for historic preservation), decision that structures were not eligible for listing on the National Register, current use and occupancy will cease after July 1 except to prepare for structure removal, and expectations for structures to be removed by January 1, 00.
- 4-30-99 Superintendent Frost issued response to incoming correspondence: “Let me start by making clear that, notwithstanding media representations, Biscayne National Park has taken no action affecting the future of Stiltsville. What is happening is the expiration of leases that the State of Florida issued and owners signed in 1976, in which the owners agreed to remove their structures when the leases expire. . . According to state officials, the original leases were issued to ensure that, across Florida, all

private stilt structures built on state-owned submerged lands would eventually be removed. No extensions or renewals were intended by the state and this national park has neither the authority nor suitable justification for intervening in the expiration of state leases in Stiltsville.”

- 6-4-99      Congresswoman Ros-Lehtinen expressed her intent to introduce legislation benefiting the park and preserving “Stiltsville”. She requested Special Use Permits continuing use and occupancy of the land until 7-31-01 so that the legislation could be worked and passed. She expressed knowledge of much support for “Stiltsville” preservation.
- 6-29-99      Standstill Agreement signed: “In consideration of the Government’s forbearance to enforce eviction of certain (7) Stiltsville ‘campsite leases’ . . .the owners agree to temporarily forbear from filing a lawsuit.” Agreement ended on December 1, 1999.
- 7-2-99      NPS received revised National Register nomination from the SHPO.
- 8-24-99      NPS Associate Director for Cultural Resources Stewardship and Partnerships transmitted revised nomination to the Keeper. The revision was based on the concept of “traditional cultural property”.
- 10-22-99      Keeper of the National Register concluded that, “Stiltsville therefore does not meet any of the National Register Criteria for Evaluation and is not eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.”
- October 99      Ros-Lehtinen introduced legislation removing 9, ½-acre circles from the park and adding 30 acres on the north end of the park.
- 11-3-99      Congressman James Hansen requested extension of Standstill Agreement for 1 year.
- 11-22-99      Standstill Agreement extended through December 1, 2000, in order to continue discussions and initiate new discussions with others to explore creative solutions to the final disposition of “Stiltsville”.
- 3-30-00      NPS Deputy Director testified opposition to proposed legislation.
- 3 thru 7-00      Subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands considered various land configurations to remove from and add to the park. HR 3033 is proposed which would delete 3900 acres from the park and add nothing.
- 5-00      NPS expressed “strong opposition” to HR 3033 which would set terrible precedent of reducing the holdings of national park lands owned by all Americans in addition to removing ecologically critical habitat from Biscayne National Park.

- 6-00 Various opposition to proposed legislation expressed (Congressman Deutsch, NPCA).
- 7-19-00 House Resources Committee defeated amendment offered by Congressman Romero-Barcelo that directed the Secretary of the Interior to undertake a review of “Stiltsville” for listing on the National Register before March 29, 2002, and to undertake actions to maintain historic character if “Stiltsville” is found eligible for listing.
- 7-19-00 House Resources Committee passed amendment offered by Congressman Hansen that transfers to the United States from Florida submerged lands approximately equal in size to the lands transferred to the State of Florida from the United States as depicted on the attached map. (Approximately 1200 acres to be transferred to the State include “Stiltsville”)